



# ABN E-NEWS

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## Professional Communication Is Key

Peggy Sellers Benson, RN, MSHA, MSN, NE-BC

*Throughout the 2016 calendar year, ABN will be focusing on strategies for developing and maintaining professional standards for communication. This is the first installment in that series.*

As nurses, we often face high stress situations where we may not feel that we have time to pay attention to the “softer” details in life, such as our tone of voice or the language we choose to use with our coworkers, patients, patients’ families, or our own loved ones. However, taking that little extra care to ensure that we treat everybody with dignity and respect can often make all the difference.

As a nurse and administrator for more than 35 years, I know all too well how difficult maintaining composure in the workplace can be, but since taking over the position of Executive Officer with the Board last year, I have been struck by reports of unprofessional behavior from nurses at all levels of the profession. I want to be clear that this is a tiny minority of the overall population of nearly 90,000 nurses providing care to patients in Alabama, but feel that it needs to be addressed for the good of the profession.

This is not an issue that is unique to nursing, as all health professionals face extraordinary pressures on the job that can make communications issues seem like a trivial consideration, but the thing that sets nursing apart from other health professions is the nurses’ special ability to reach out and offer comfort to the sick and hurting in virtually any situation. This includes the words we use when we talk to the people around us, particularly patients and their families, but also our coworkers, administrators, and even our licensing boards.

So please, let’s all pledge to take that brief extra moment to think about the words we choose. Here’s looking forward to a wonderful year in 2016, as we continue to move the Alabama Board of Nursing and the entire nursing profession forward in our New Direction.

**APN Corner**  
*News and Notes on*  
*Advanced Practice Nursing*

**Take Care to Ensure that Collaborative Practice Applications are Accurate and Complete**

Dawn Daniel, MSN, RN  
Nurse Consultant for Advanced Practice Nursing

I am pleased to report that we have made tremendous progress over the past couple of years, as ABN has worked with the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners (BME) to expedite the process for reviewing applications for Certified Registered Nurse Practitioners (CRNPs) and Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs) in collaborative practice with physicians. Nurses applying for advanced practice approval can help us and themselves by paying careful attention to their applications to ensure that they are accurate and complete. Before submitting your application, please be sure that all information is complete, paying particular attention to the following:

- Practice Sites (including home visits)
- Covering Physicians
- Specialty Formularies

These are the three areas where we see the most errors on applications. If any of this information is incomplete or inaccurate, we cannot fully process your application for full approval. Your assistance in taking care with these details is a great help to us as we continue to move nursing forward in Alabama.

**Coming Soon: the New Look of ABN**

Robert Rollins  
Director, Information Technologies

I am pleased to report that we will be rolling out a new website for the Alabama Board of Nursing over the next couple of months. This project has been in development for a number of months and will greatly improve our interface with licensees, public officials, and the general public. This new design incorporates many of the improvements we have already made to our web-based systems, but will feature an exciting new look and greatly improved functionality.

One of the developments I am proudest of is our new system for uploading continuing education (CE) documentation. Most CE is earned from what we refer to as “Board-Approved Providers.” These providers are responsible for recording your CE with the Board. However, many nurses continue to earn contact hours from perfectly acceptable providers who do not provide documentation to the Board. In these cases, it is the responsibility of the licensee to document these credits and be prepared to provide evidence of them to ABN staff. When fully implemented, our new system will allow nurses to take pictures of certificates or other CE documentation from a computer or any mobile device, including a mobile phone, and upload it directly to the Individual CE Records on the ABN website, [www.abn.alabama.gov](http://www.abn.alabama.gov).

As you can see, we are very excited about the upcoming relaunch of [www.abn.alabama.gov](http://www.abn.alabama.gov). Please stay tuned to us on Facebook, Twitter, and our list-servs for further developments.

## The ANRC: the Place to Go for Alabama Nursing

LaDonna M. Patton, MSN, RN, CEN  
Director, Alabama Nursing Resource Center

Among the many exciting developments with ABN over the past months is a project I am particularly proud of — the upcoming launch of the Alabama Nursing Resource Center, or ANRC, which we hope will become Alabama's go-to source for everything nursing-related.

This major undertaking, which will coincide with the relaunch of [www.abn.alabama.gov](http://www.abn.alabama.gov), represents the culmination of months of hard work by the Board, our new Executive Officer, and several members of the ABN staff, including myself. A few of the features of the ANRC will include:

- Updated and new Board-provided CE course offerings.
- Access to information on Nursing in Alabama, the US, and around the world.
- High-level nursing research and new opportunities for Nursing Graduate students.
- A public information portal to promote and improve knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the nursing profession.
- Information on nursing specialty and professional organizations nationwide.

Of particular interest to me is the new direction we are taking in the development of ABN's Board-provided CE offerings. As a Nurse Consultant in the Compliance Division of the Board for over six years, I saw first-hand the sort of repetitive practice errors that can get even veteran nurses into trouble. ABN's new vision for CE development will seek to apply this knowledge in developing evidence-based CE offerings that provide real professional enrichment to nurses at every level of practice. We believe that this approach will serve our mission of public protection and help Alabama to become a national leader in professional development and patient safety.

And it's important to understand that CE course offerings are only one aspect of the ANRC. Our mission in undertaking this project is to offer Alabama something entirely new—a one-stop shop for everything anyone might need relating to the nursing profession in Alabama. Obviously, this project won't be completed overnight and, in fact, will likely never truly be what we could call "complete," but that's because it will be a reflection of healthcare in general and nursing, specifically—dynamic, exciting, and ever-growing.



## **IMPORTANT NOTICE: Effective in 2016**

In light of recent incidents involving fraudulent license cards and verifications, the Alabama Board of Nursing (ABN) voted at its September 2015 Board Meeting to stop issuing license cards for LPNs, RNs, and APRNs as well as security paper approval cards for CRNPs and CNMs. Licensees will receive a Notice of Approval to practice based on their licensure with direction to access the Board's website for licensure verification. In addition to the changes noted above, the ABN will mail out a newly-designed Continuing Education (CE) card to all licensees. This card will be used to process CE contact hours obtained from Board-Approved Providers. The CE cards will not expire and will remain with the licensee, whether or not the license remains in good standing.

**AGAIN, THE CE CARD IS NOT A LICENSE AND PRIMARY SOURCE VERIFICATION MUST BE OBTAINED IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE VALIDITY OF THE LICENSE.**

In order to ensure a smooth transition as the Board moves away from license cards for nurses, ABN will be issuing dual documents to licensees over the next few months. Please note that the license card does not qualify as verification of the license itself and that employers should continue to verify with the Board through either online verification request, the Subscription Service, or License Look-up on the ABN website, [www.abn.alabama.gov](http://www.abn.alabama.gov).

### **Governor Robert Bentley Appoints Board Members for 2016**

Honor L. Ingels  
Chief Information Officer

The Board is pleased to welcome the following Board Members, who were appointed by Governor Robert Bentley to serve new terms, effective January 1, 2016:

**Francine Parker, EdD, MSN, RN**

Dr. Parker was reappointed to the Board, where she will serve as Board President for the second consecutive year. She serves in a Nurse Educator position. Dr. Parker's current term expires December 31, 2019.

**LaDonna McDonnell, LPN, WCC, DWC**

Ms. McDonnell also was reappointed to the Board by Governor Bentley, following her appointment to serve the remainder of a former Board Member's unexpired term. She serves in an AFLPN position on the Board. Ms. McDonnell's current term expires December 31, 2019.

**Valorie Dearmon, DNP, MSN, BSN**

The newest Member of the Board, Dr. Dearmon was appointed to serve her first term on the ABN. She serves in a Nurse Educator position. Dr. Dearmon's current term expires December 31, 2019.